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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 18 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on 1 February 2011, and concerning so-called local elections conducted by the proxy regime in Abkhazia, Georgia, on 12 February 2011 (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I to the identical letters dated 18 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on 1 February 2011

On 1 February 2011 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation made yet another statement, which purposefully attempts to downplay the importance of the non-use of force pledge made by the President of Georgia on 23 November 2010 in the European Parliament and later reinforced in letters to the heads of various international organizations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation challenges the peace initiative of the President of Georgia by claiming that the rhetoric of the President is hostile to Georgia's "neighbouring States" and that the televised phone-in address aired by the Russian language First Caucasus Television (PIK) made on 25 January 2010 contained "hidden threats" to the "new republics". It is alarming, however not surprising, that Russia is vigorously pushing this propaganda message not only through its official statements, but also diplomatic channels, as well as various round tables and expert activities undertaken by Government-sponsored think tanks and non-governmental organizations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia would like to bring to the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and its Soviet-style propaganda machine the exact quote from the statement of the President of Georgia: "Every representative of Georgia's multi-ethnic society, including the forcefully displaced Greeks, Armenians, Ukrainians and Estonians, should say: 'Next year — to Sokhumi ... I will repeat this until we return to our home'". This statement by the President of Georgia was made in the context of the return of the internally displaced persons to their homes, from which they were brutally evicted following a question of a journalist regarding the return of the internally displaced persons. Russia's attempts to interpret this phrase as a call to use force is ridiculous and cheap. The safe and dignified return of all internally displaced persons to their homes continues to be one of the top priorities of the Government of Georgia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to stress once again that the pledge of Georgia not to use force against the Russian occupation forces and the proxy regimes with the aim of restoring Georgia's territorial integrity remains an international legal obligation of Georgia, no matter how much Russia tries to downplay its significance. Georgia is seriously motivated to pursue a peaceful agenda towards its occupied regions as exemplified by the calls to engage in a dialogue with the Russian authorities, as well as with the populations of the occupied regions.

At the same time, the safe and dignified return of the internally displaced persons remains an extremely significant outstanding issue, which requires the urgent and immediate attention of the international community. Several hundred thousands of the internally displaced persons are unable to return to their homes

because of the inhuman policy of ethnic discrimination pursued by the Russian Federation and its proxy regimes in the occupied Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia.

Over the last 18 years Russia has been continuously attempting to downplay the importance of the return of internally displaced persons and was hiding behind the toothless argument that no progress was possible until the non-use of force pledge was made. Now, once such a pledge is in force from the Georgian side, Russia has to move towards discussing the issues related to internally displaced persons seriously. Among the three most important issues which now require the urgent attention of the international community, including the Geneva Co-Chairs, are the reciprocal non-use of force pledge from Russia, establishment of the international security regimes in the occupied territories and the launch of the internally displaced persons return process to Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Russia's recent statements and actions give us no choice but to believe that Russia is not ready to discuss either of these issues at this stage, and therefore chooses to revert back to the military and propaganda rhetoric.

Moscow seems to be also concerned that Georgia is referring to the Russian Federation as a hostile State. Indeed, the President of Georgia stated in a televised address that Russia remained a hostile State, as it was an occupying force. In the same speech, the President also expressed the hope that circumstances would permit him not to use this term in the future. If Russia wants to hear friendly rhetoric from Tbilisi, it will have to act in a friendly manner. But as long as Russia occupies Georgia's regions, it will be maintained that Russia is an occupying and hostile State. This, however, does not mean and should not be interpreted in a way that Georgia's commitment not to use force is not in effect any more.

The Russian Federation needs to start living up to its obligations under international law. By continuing the policy of violating Georgia's territorial integrity, breaching the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008, further militarizing the occupied regions, rejecting all offers of dialogue, not recognizing Georgia's Government and pursuing aggressive military rhetoric against Georgia, Russia will hardly manage to change the perception of Tbilisi that Russia is a hostile State.

Tbilisi, 7 February 2011

Annex II to the identical letters dated 18 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the so-called local elections conducted by the proxy regime in Abkhazia, Georgia, on 12 February 2011

On 12 February 2011, the proxy regime operating in the Russian-occupied region of Abkhazia, Georgia, conducted so-called local elections. Considering the fact that, as a result of ethnic cleansing executed in Abkhazia, the overwhelming majority of the local population was expelled from the places of original residence, this pseudo-democratic political act represents yet another cynical attempt to mislead the international community.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia condemns the so-called elections in the Russian-occupied region of Abkhazia and views them as another step towards legitimization of the outcome of the ethnic cleansing. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia calls upon the international community to make an adequate assessment of the illegal elections.

Tbilisi, 14 February 2011